

TO: Media, interested parties

FROM: DPVA Communications

RE: Lay of the land

The 2015 election has always been an uphill battle for Democrats; off-off-off year elections are not traditionally friendly ground for a party that relies on high turnout numbers for success. That we're heading into election day competitive, poised to make gains in the Senate, and have made the progress we have, is a testament both to the odds we face and the incredible ground we've gained just to meet them. Heading into Election Day, it's important to note what we're up against and how far we've come. Some key factors:

Environment

While many competitive districts shifting to be more Democratic long-term, the demographic gains we've made are among populations who do not typically turn out to vote, especially in an off-off-off year. While our unprecedented field and targeting programs have helped, **all data shows that likely voters this election are still much more Republican.** And fatigue from the seventh year of a Democratic presidency in a state with five statewide Democrats hurts the environment even more.

Even more, Travis Fain of Daily Press put it best on October 31:

After all, Trump and the wide Republican field have juiced political interest in an off election year. Add in other things; the soap opera story behind Speaker of the House John Boehner's replacement in Washington, for example; and you've got a recipe for that extra shot of awareness that could be crucial for Republicans. "Think about what that means practically," said Quentin Kidd, head of Christopher Newport University's Wason Center for Public Policy. "Republican voters are getting communicated to a lot."
[[Daily Press](#), 10/31]

District disadvantages

Four of the five closest races this cycle do not have Democratic incumbents, a disadvantage for Democrats. As far as open seats go, the 29th and 10th districts are somewhat of an experiment in campaigning for the first time in years without established statesmen-senators on the ticket. Our challengers in SD-7 and SD-13 face entrenched legislators with powerful patrons and war chests in areas previously written off as hopeless. **That Democrats are competitive at all, not to mention may ultimately win in these seats is a huge gain for the party this year.**

Gerrymandering, gerrymandering, gerrymandering

Senate districts aren't as gerrymandered as the House, but it's a known fact that running for almost any local office in Virginia is a disadvantage for the Democrat. The non-competitive nature of the House has provided a boon to Republicans as well.

While Democrats across the board are making tough choices about resources, House Republicans are free to spend money wherever. And with the better part of 67 Republican Delegates lacking anything

else to do this election, dump money they have. For example, Bill Howell's PAC spent \$310,000 on Laura Overy in October alone, and the leadership machine threw \$288,000 at Danny Vargas in just two weeks.

Outside cash dumps

It was an impressive display of tone-deaf hypocrisy when Republicans decried Everytown's investment towards Virginia gun violence prevention. The reality is, Republicans had their own outside groups that leveled the playing field with a nearly equal amount of outside spending. Their candidates saw an onslaught of outside money.

- Americans for Prosperity (Koch Brothers): [ad buy for Nancy Dye](#)
- National Rifle Association: [thousands](#) to Glen Sturtevant and others
- Republican State Leadership Committee: [nearly \\$1 million](#) from Washington DC Republicans

Ultimately -- and against the odds -- Democrats have invested in, and executed, data and field programs that will pay dividends, both on Tuesday and long into the future.